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A  
VINDICATION

OF MY

Lord Shaftesbury,

On the Subject of

RIDICULE.

BEING

Remarks upon a Book, intitled,

ESSAYS *on the* Characteristics.

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πρὸς ἅπασιν τοῖς ἄλλοις δικαίοις καὶ τῷτο  
γέγραπται, ΤΟ ΟΜΟΙΩΣ ΑΜΦΟΙΝ ΑΚΡΟΑΣΘΑΙ.  
*Demosthen. de corona.*

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L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN NOON, at the *White-*  
*Hart*, in *Cheapside*, near the *Poultry*.  
MDCCLI.

[ Price 6d. ]

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## VINDICATION, &amp;c.

**T**HIS author thinks it proper to introduce his remarks by paying his Lordship a few complements ; particularly, on his being so strenuous a vindicator of private judgment and universal freedom of inquiry. What he says upon this subject, may with the greatest propriety be call'd mere complement, when it is observ'd that in another part of his book, where the author appears in a different character, and speaks in the name of the *wisest and best* of the *English* clergy, he complains of his Lordship for endeavouring to *instill illegal Opinions*, p. 400. and had in the pages immediately preceding made this remark, That *our excellent and unrivaled constitution allows a perfect freedom of inquiry* ; which, when compar'd with the XXth article and the canons of the church, plainly shews, that the *perfect liberty* for which this author is an advocate, is very different from that which my Lord *Shaftesbury* so generously asserted. And indeed, before he has finished this part of the ceremonial, he precipitately enters upon an apology for his Lordship's having *extremely labour'd a point so plain*, as what may  
*poss. bly*

possibly appear strange to some, and insinuates that the reasons which his Lordship had for so doing are now *dying away*, p. 3, 4. As it is hard to conceive who they are to whom it should appear so mighty strange, that a real lover of liberty should take every opportunity of appearing in defence of it; so, I believe, were his Lordship now alive, and capable of favouring the public with his sentiments, we should find them to be very different from what this author suggests. The noble writer has himself informed us in the conclusion of his *Essay on the freedom of wit and humour*, that at the time of his writing it, the *talons of certain zealous gentlemen*, (by whom, I presume, he means gentlemen of the like *intolerant principles* mentioned by our author in his third page) had been *pared by the magistrate*, but as he did not *then* look upon that as a sufficient reason against his insisting so copiously and strongly upon the rights of private judgment, and the privilege of free and unrestrained thought: I imagine, that were he *now* among us, he would think that there were still some reasons for all the true and cordial friends of religious liberty, or the natural unalienable claim of mankind to the use and exercise of their own reason, upon every subject of speculation, to exert themselves resolutely and with courage in its behalf: and thank heaven, there are some among us who can see such reasons, and are duly influenc'd by them.

May their numbers daily increase ! The author likewise expresses his approbation of the noble writers *frequent recommendation of "politeness, chearfulness and good humour" in the prosecution of our most important inquiries*, and then proceeds to lay down the particular subject of this first Essay, which is the *Test of Ridicule*.

THE second section consists wholly of some remarks upon the noble authors manner of handling this subject, which I shall have occasion to consider bye and bye.

THE beginning of the third section, which consists of several observations upon the powers of sense, imagination, memory and reason, I shall intirely pass over, as having in my apprehension, very little connection, even with the author's own plan, but at p. 16. he advances a distinction, of which he makes considerable use in the course of his Essay, and which for that reason it may be proper to consider. He there tells us, That perhaps there is no species of writing, except only that of *mere narration, but what will fall under the denomination of poetry, eloquence or argument*. It is needless to consider what is here offer'd upon the subject of poetry, the author himself intimating, p. 21. that it is not so immediately relative to the point before him ; with respect to eloquence, he expresses himself thus, p. 21. *Eloquence then is no other than a species of poetry applied to the particular end of persuasion*. But if eloquence be a species of poetry, how is it con-

consistent with the distinction above-mentioned? Can eloquence be a species of poetry, and yet each of them be a distinct species of writing? Another observation which this author makes with respect to eloquence, p. 22. is this, *so that every opinion which eloquence instills, though it be the pure result of certain fictitious images impressed upon the fancy, is always regarded as the result of rational conviction, and received by the mind as truth.* And are there not many arguments which are the result of certain fictitious images impressed upon the fancy? (Of which perhaps the Essay we are now considering, may afford a lively specimen) and are not the opinions which these instill always regarded as the result of rational conviction, and received by the mind as truth? Notwithstanding therefore any thing contained in this observation, there may not be that wide essential difference between eloquence and argument, which this author is so fond of establishing, and which according to him is pointed out by the lines and boundaries which nature has prescrib'd, p. 16. But in order more effectually to support this distinction, the author takes notice, p. 26. That *the mighty orators, who could sway the passions of a mixed multitude, found their art baffled and overthrown, when opposed to the cool determinations of cunning ministers, or the determined will of arbitrary masters.* And will not the determined will of arbitrary masters, even tho' their ministers should not happen  
to

to be over and above cunning, be sufficient to baffle likewise the best and most forcible arguments that human reason can invent? Did not King *James* the first, and his Son, the royal martyr baffle for a time, some of the strongest remonstrances, remonstrances fill'd with such close and cogent reasonings as would have convinced any understandings, but those of tyrants and oppressors? Observe the style of our *British Solomon*. "Mr. *Speaker*, we have heard by  
 "divers reports to our great grief, that our  
 "distance from the houses of Parliament, caus'd  
 "by our indisposition of health, has embolden'd  
 "the fury and popular spirit of some of the  
 "commons, *to argue and debate publickly* of mat-  
 "ters far above their reach and capacity, tending  
 "to our high dishonour and breach of preroga-  
 "tive royal; these are therefore to command  
 "you to make known in our name unto the  
 "house, that none therein, from henceforth, do  
 "meddle with any thing concerning our  
 "government, and deep matters of state". \*

But this author not content with making eloquence and argument a distinct species of writing endeavours to set them at irreconcilable variance. To this purpose he tells us, *p. 29.* That *eloquence gains its end of persuasion by offering apparent truth to the imagination, as argument*

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\* Letter of king *James the first* to Sir Thomas Richardson, *speaker of the house of commons*, ap. *Cokes detections of the court and state*, &c. p. 119. V. I.

gument gains its proper end of conviction by offering real truth to the understanding. Do all arguments then convey real truth to the understanding? If so, there is an end of all distinction between truth and falsehood; since arguments and the most formal and peculiar rules of ratiocination may be, and frequently are applied on both sides of a question; if they do not, then what becomes of our author's distinction? Or, do real truths convince any otherwise than by being apparent truths? Or how can eloquence gain its end of persuasion by offering apparent truth to the imagination, any farther than the imagination influences the understanding? The author however proceeds to illustrate his observation, by saying, *ibid.* That to instruction or inquiry every species of eloquence must for ever be an enemy. What! that species, (to make use of the author's terms, tho' it be indeed an essential part or branch of whatever deserves the name of eloquence) which consists in giving clear ideas, in making choice of the properest words for that end, in a just arrangement of arguments, and in a strong and forcible deduction of the conclusions arising from them? What was it that occasion'd *Socrates* to be reckoned one of the most eloquent of men, but the happy talent he had of conveying the most *rational* ideas in the most *convincing* manner? And if, as is abundantly plain, there is no species of eloquence but what must include clearness and per-

perspicuity ; then is it so far from being true that *every species of eloquence must for ever be an enemy to speculative instruction and inquiry* ; that on the contrary, there is no species of it, of which this branch at least must not be applied for the successful discovery and communication of truth. The author seems to have been aware of this difficulty, and has therefore introduced, *p.* 30. a saving clause from Mr. *Locke*, in which order and clearness, tho' branches of the art of rhetoric are expressly excepted by him when making objections to that art ; and tho' this observation contains more of truth in it, then the previous one of the authors, yet does it intirely destroy that opposition and contrariety between eloquence and argument, which he seems so desirous of establishing.

BUT tho' we have hitherto seen eloquence thus despised, and beyond measure degraded, she is now to appear in somewhat of a different light ; and we are told, *p.* 30. That *if we regard what is of more importance to a man than mere speculative truth, I mean the practical ends of human life and moral action, then eloquence assumes a higher nature : Nor is there in this practical sense, any necessary connection between moving the passions and misleading the judgment.* This I must own, is a very extraordinary discovery, and very few have, I believe, hitherto imagined, that the passions were more concern'd in speculative truth, than in moral action ; are not the pas-  
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sions

sions and not speculative truth the immediate subject of morality? Or in what other way can the judgment be possibly misled by the passions, than in this practical and moral sense? Are there any passions in our nature, which cause an aversion to this or that particular truth as such? Or does not the judgment on the other hand stand ready to embrace with the utmost impartiality and indifference every thing that has the appearance of truth, till it has received a false bias from some *immoral* inclination or *perverted* passion? So that the direct contrary of what this author asserts is the manifest truth of the case, and it is in this *practical* or *moral* sense only that there can be any *connection* between *misleading* the judgment and *moving* the passions. But tho' our author has in this passage endeavoured to pay a compliment to eloquence (of what kind it is we have seen,) yet she is not long, it seems, to be thus well thought of, and in the very next page, we are told, that eloquence is of *a vague, unsteady nature, merely relative to the imaginations and passions of mankind*. What then becomes of the respective *provinces*, the *several boundaries of poetry, eloquence and argument, which nature has prescribed*, and which this author had so minutely pointed out in his 16th and 17th pages? Is nature so fickle and changing that even her *boundaries* are vague, and her *lines* unsteady? Has eloquence *two natures*, one bounded and confining it to a *peculiar province*, the other giving it full scope to

to range and wander at large? If so, she may possibly sometime or another make an inroad upon the *province of argument*, which tho' perhaps not quite so agreeable to our author in some of his minds; yet I see not how he could justly blame her, or call it *unwarrantable*; since, according to him, this would be altogether as *natural* as keeping within her own *boundaries*. Nay, our author himself, *p.* 37. has been so complaisant as to conduct her into this very *province*, and tells us, *p.* 37. that *amongst these several kinds of eloquence, justness of thought and expression, striking figures, argument adorn'd with every pathetic grace are the characters of the highest: Sophistry and buffoonery, ambiguous and dishonest hints, coarse language, false and indecent images, are the characters of the lowest.* Thus says our author, *p.* 38. *We are at length arrived at the point where eloquence and argument, persuasion and conviction unite; having been before at points, where they were not only distinct, but quite opposite and inconsistent.* The result then of this most ingenious disquisition is, that the *lowest* kind of eloquence, which has no argument in it, is a distinct species of writing from that of which argument is a necessary characteristic. And this is what the author calls, *p.* 41. *lighting up a central branch, in order to judge aright of the proportions of a spacious dome.*

As the author has been so large in his comparative view of eloquence and argument;

what he says upon the separate head of argument is very brief, and may be pass'd over without doing any injustice to the proposed subject of this Essay. Some perhaps will be curious to know why this writer has taken so much pompous and learned pains, (tho' as it happens, with so little effect) to separate eloquence from argument, and set them at variance with each other. The author himself has given us the reason, and we find by what he says, p. 41. that it was to *enable the intelligent reader to see with ease, that wit, raillery and ridicule in every shape they can possibly assume, are no other than so many species of poetry or eloquence*, tho' perhaps his intelligent reader would not have been able to perceive the sting of this observation, had not the author previously taken care to inform him that there was *high* eloquence and *low* eloquence, by the help of which distinction, the intended application of it may easily be made. And thus we are come to that part of the Essay, where the author professes to enter more directly upon the subject of Ridicule, after having furnish'd himself with such ample materials for the thorough discussion of it.

BUT as the whole of this Essay has a particular reference to the characteristics of the Earl of *Shaftebury*, I think it absolutely necessary both for enabling the reader to form a right judgment of the sentiments of the noble author, and like-

likewise for putting our remarks upon this Essayist, in the clearest and strongest light, to collect and place in one view, a few passages out of those two treatises, to which the whole of what is advanced in this his first Essay does still more immediately refer. The first passage which naturally offers it self to consideration is in his letter on Enthusiasm. "All I contend for is to think of it, [religion,] *in a right humour*, and that this goes more than half way towards thinking rightly of it, is what I shall endeavour to *demonstrate*. GOOD HUMOUR is not only the best security against enthusiasm, but the best foundation of true religion". *Characteristics*, Vol. I. p. 22. Again, p. 32. "My notion is, that provided we treat religion with good manners, we can never use too much good humour, or examine it with too much freedom and familiarity". P. 61. the noble author expresses himself thus, "One of those principal lights or natural mediums, by which things are to be view'd in order to a thorough recognition is *ridicule* itself, or that manner of proof, by which we discern whatever is liable to just raillery on any subject". "In good earnest, says his Lordship, p. 62. when one considers what use is sometimes made of this species of wit, and to what an excess it has arisen of late in some characters of the age, one may be startled a little, and  
in

“ in doubt what to think of the practice, or  
 “ whither this rallying humour will at length  
 “ carry us”. P. 69. the noble writer ob-  
 serves that “tis the habit alone of *reasoning*  
 “ which can make a *reasoner*. And men can  
 “ never be better invited to the habit, than  
 “ when they find pleasure in it. A freedom  
 “ of raillery, a liberty in decent language to  
 “ question every thing, and an allowance of  
 “ unravelling or refuting any *argument*, with-  
 “ out offence to the *arguer*, are the only terms  
 “ which can render such *speculative conversa-*  
 “ *tion* any way agreeable”. And p. 77. that  
 “ we shall grow better *reasoners* by *reasoning*  
 “ pleasantly, and at our ease”. In p. 96.  
 he expresses himself thus, “I can hardly  
 “ imagine, that in a pleasant way, men  
 “ should ever be talked out of their love of  
 “ society, or reason’d out of humanity and  
 “ common sense. A *mannerly* wit can hurt no  
 “ cause or interest, for which I am in the  
 “ least concerned ; and philosophical speculati-  
 “ ons, politely managed, can never surely ren-  
 “ der mankind more unfociable or uncivilized”.  
 P. 128. the noble author addresses his friend  
 in this manner: “By this time, my friend,  
 “ you may possibly I hope be satisfied, that as  
 “ I am in earnest in defending *raillery*, so I  
 “ can be *sober* too in the use of it. ’Tis in re-  
 “ ality a serious study, to learn to temper and  
 “ regulate that *humour*, which *nature* has gi-  
 “ ven us as a more lenitive remedy against vice,  
 and

“ and a kind of specific against superstition and  
 “ melancholy delusion. There is a great difference  
 “ between seeking how to raise a laugh  
 “ from every thing, and seeking in every thing  
 “ what justly may be laugh’d at”. And in  
 the following page, “A man must be soundly  
 “ ridiculous who with all the wit imaginable  
 “ would go about to ridicule *wisdom*, or laugh  
 “ at *honesty* or *good manners*. And once more,  
 “ p. 134. let the solemn reprovers of vice  
 “ proceed in the manner most suitable to their  
 “ genius and character. I am ready to congratulate  
 “ with them on the success of their  
 “ labours in that authoritative way, which is  
 “ allowed them: I know not, in the mean  
 “ time, why others may not be allowed to  
 “ ridicule folly, and recommend *wisdom* and  
 “ *virtue* if possibly they can, in a way of  
 “ *pleasantry* and *mirth*”.

BY attending to these passages, we may easily learn what it was the noble author designed to recommend in his letter concerning enthusiasm, and his Essay on the freedom of wit and humour, and what he meant by the *Test of Ridicule*; and he of course qualified to try the force and value of those remarks and criticisms, which the writer we are now considering, has made upon those two treatises. And it will be very natural to observe in the first place, what little reason this Essay-writer had to complain (from him a most awkward complaint indeed) of the noble author for not hav-

having condescended to a little more precision in the question now before us, p. 7. This is a topic he has copiously enlarged upon, and tells us, p. 9. that the *Formalist* when coping with the mercurial spirit of modern wit is under a double difficulty, not only to conquer his enemy, but to find him. An enemy, it seems, the author was resolved to find, and it was lucky methinks, that what he could not so easily discover in the two treatises of the noble author, he should readily meet with in his own imagination, where he had before prepar'd his weapons and artillery. But it appears from the foregoing passages, that the noble author not only knew what he himself was aiming at, but intended that his reader should know it too, and is very far from being such an *hussar in disputation* as this Essayist would persuade us to believe. Does he not in section the third of his letter concerning enthusiasm, expressly lay down the very thing he intended to *demonstrate*? And again, in the fourth section, "My notion is, &c. And at the close of his *Essay on the freedom of wit and humour*, p. 149. He expressly calls the subject of that and the former treatise *his cause*, making some reflections upon the manner in which he had been handling it. This in my apprehension, looks a good deal like method and order: In confirmation of which remark, let it be remember'd as before hinted, that every one of the above-

cited

cited passages are taken out of those two treatises already mentioned, in which one and the same subject is pursued: So that, if this Essay-writer had been any thing of a *Gleaner*, he needed not to have been at a great deal of trouble in discovering his Lordships drift and design; and yet with all his *picking up* he has never once throughout his whole Essay given his reader a fair view, or even a single glance of the real sentiment which the noble author intended in these two treatises to inculcate; no, not so much as of the subject matter of them; but has dress'd up an uncouth preposterous phantom, insists upon it that that was what the noble writer undertook to defend, and then triumphs over him for having so indifferently perform'd his part. 'Tis in the 68th page that this phantom is exhibited to view; where we are told, that *ridicule is made the test of what is rational, instead of reason being made the test of what is ridiculous*. Look back, reader, look back to the foregoing quotations, and see whether his Lordship has ever once *opposed ridicule to reason*, or considered them as two different *mediums* of discovering truth, as this author farther intimates, *p. 65*, and *p. 83*. Or whether, on the contrary, it does not most evidently and undeniably appear, that his sole aim was to inculcate a particular *method of reasoning*, which he thought best fitted for the investigation of truth. Is not the ridicule he contends for such as is consistent

sistent with *unraveling* and *refuting* arguments, and that may be introduced into *philosophical speculations*? This is so far from *opposing* ridicule to reason, which is what the noble author is charged with, that it is on the contrary, directly and in the most express manner, making it subservient to it; and this perhaps might have appear'd sufficiently clear, even from the *Essays on the Characteristics*, if the author had happen'd to quote a passage intire, of which he has only given a part, p. 65. The passage I refer to, is that in the Essay on the freedom of wit and humour, p. 61. *One of those principal lights or natural mediums, by which things are to be view'd, in order to a thorow recognition, is ridicule itself.* Here the Essay-writer stops, but the noble author goes on, *or that manner of proof, by which we discern whatever is liable to just raillery on any subject.* Is recommending a manner of proof *opposing* reason? Or is pointing out a method of proof, by which to discern whatever is liable to just raillery on any subject, the same thing as making ridicule a test of truth, independent of all argumentative trial, or rational examination? I say argumentative trial or rational examination, because no one (it might have been imagin'd) who but believes my Lord Shaftesbury to have been a writer of common sense, would ever imagine that he could possibly intend to lay down such an absurd and self-repugnant proposition as this, that the mere laughing at a thing would be a proper or sufficient

sufficient way of trying whether the thing deserved to be laughed at. As his Lordship was fully persuaded that the highest ridicule may possibly take place in matters of speculation, controversy and argument, and that it had actually been introduced into them; so he as well as others, knew that the natural and proper rule by which to discover what was ridiculous in reasons province, was the use of reason; in like manner as our sense of order, beauty and proportion, judges and determines as to what is ridiculous in architecture, painting and dress, or whatever else must be supposed naturally to fall under their cognizance and inspection. But then he justly supposed that there must be some certain way and *method* of using this reason, which might be more successful than any other, not only towards detecting the *ridiculous*, but also towards discovering the solid and the true. This *method* it was his design in the two treatises to recommend, and what it was is abundantly plain from the fore-cited passages, which shew it to be no other than reasoning upon every subject in an easy, chearful, good humour'd way, which the noble author recommends in opposition to that sour and melancholy, that magisterial and imposing manner of treating religion, which in his opinion has done such infinite mischief in the world. Nothing can be plainer than that his Lordship uses the word *ridicule* as synonymous to *freedom, familiarity,*

good humour, and the like. This indeed is what the Essay-writer takes notice of, but in such a manner as must necessarily deceive those of his readers, who are not acquainted with my Lord Shaftesbury's writings. He tells us, p. 71. that by *shifting and mixing his terms* he (*the noble author*) generally *slides insensibly into mere encomiums upon good-breeding, chearfulness, urbanity and free inquiry*. Most admirable critic! thus to represent an author as *sliding insensibly* into what is the profess'd, deliberate and uniform design of his whole work. *All I contend for*, (say his Lordship) *is to think of it, i. e. religion in a right humour, and that this goes more than half way towards thinking rightly of it, is what I shall endeavour to demonstrate*. It immediately follows, GOOD HUMOUR is not only the best security, &c. as above. Thus evident is it, that *good-breeding, chearfulness, urbanity and free inquiry* were the purposed subject of his discourse in these two treatises; yet does this author take upon him to assert in direct contradiction to his Lordship's own most express and serious declaration, that they were not the purposed subjects of them, but that he only *slid into them insensibly*: And then (as the Essay-writer goes on) *from these premises often draws consequences in favour of ridicule, as if it were an equivalent term*. As it is so very plain from perusing the treatises, and even from the single passage just now quoted, that the noble author did indeed consider it as an equivalent

valent term ; and as he had a right to consider and make use of it as an equivalent term ; so it is little wonder he should do so, when it is considered that his favourite author *Horace*, had used it in the same sense before him. *Ridiculum acri fortius & melius magnas plerumque secutur res.* For who can imagine that *Horace* meant any thing else than that pleasantry and good humour, (the natural consequence of which when freely, *i.e.* justly indulged, would be on some occasions, and that innocently a smile or a laugh) that this, I say, was a much better way of trying the worth and value of things than sharpness and severity? And accordingly his Lordship has quoted this very passage, as expressing his own opinion and sense of the matter. To the same purpose is the motto prefixed to his letter concerning enthusiasm, *Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?* Which two lines alone do easily suggest a much better and juster idea of the design of the author in the two treatises then can possibly be gathered from all that this Essay-writer has *picked up*, out of the author himself, which he has scattered through his Essay, and disposed of with such peculiar dexterity, as to rob it of all the manly sense and meaning, with which it appears in the original work, and of necessity to deceive those who read this Essay, but have never had the infinitely greater pleasure of conversing with the Characteristics of the noble writer.

And

And here, before I proceed, it may be proper to observe, what an agreeable variety and exchange of phrase and expression is to be met with in the two treatises we are now descanting upon, even when the author is more particularly reminding the reader of the peculiar and leading point he is so strenuously pursuing; which he does by the promiscuous use of the terms *freedom, humour, raillery, ridicule, mirth, pleasantry*, and others of the same general meaning. Possibly this may appear to some an observation altogether trifling and unnecessary; but the reason of my making it is this; that many have affected to speak of my Lord *Shaftesbury's* writings, (and in this they have been implicitly followed by others) as if *Ridicule* was the burthen of every page, and contributed to the formation of almost every period: And those who have never yet perused them, may very possibly be surprized to find how sparingly that word or any other of the like derivation is made use of, even in those very treatises which are the subject of this *Essay upon Ridicule*, but to go on.

FROM the foregoing passages out of the two treatises, and from the observations that have been made upon them, it is easy to see that supposing this author had indeed offer'd all that *Tully has said about Ridicule in his second book, de oratore*, it would have been as little to the purpose, as is the rest of his *Essay*; for what have puns and jokes, witti-

witticisms and facetious turns to do with the leading principles, and grand design of these two treatises? These are what his Lordship would perhaps have admitted as the natural consequence of that ease and pleasantry with which he would have truth investigated, and principles canvass'd; but he intirely agreed with *Tully* in looking upon them as the *lowest kind* or branch of *eloquence*. By looking back likewise to the passages, which have before been quoted from the noble author, the reader will be able to judge of the propriety of a remark made by this Essay-writer, p. 106. He tells us, That *Lord Shaftesbury himself*, in many other parts of his book, strongly insists on the necessity of bringing the imaginations and passions under the dominion of reason, and quotes a passage from the *Essay on the freedom of wit and humour*, in which the noble writer observes, that "the only poison to reason is passion, for false reasoning is soon redress'd where passion is removed", speaking of that *horror* and *consternation* which thro' the mutual antipathies of a party spirit, some are apt to fall into upon the very hearing certain propositions of philosophy. The Essay-writer adds, and it is difficult to assign any cause that will not reflect some dishonour on the noble writer, why he should thus strangely have privileged this passion of contempt (so he affects to call the natural inclination to Ridicule) from so necessary a subjection. But does it not appear in the clearest

clearest manner possible, that his Lordship never did make any such *attempt*? Does talking *in good earnest of the excesses to which this species of wit is risen of late*? Does his saying, that *there is a great deal of difference between seeking how to raise a laugh from every thing, and seeking in every thing what justly may be laughed at*? Does the *hope* he expresses to his friend of his being *satisfied that as he was in earnest in defence of raillery, so he could be sober too in the use of it*? Does his saying that *it is in reality, a serious study, to learn to temper and regulate this natural humour*? Once more, Does his saying, that *a man would be soundly ridiculous, who with all the wit imaginable, would go about to ridicule wisdom or laugh at honesty and good manners*? I ask it again, do these expressions look like *privileging* this passion from subjection? Do they not all most clearly convey a direct contrary sentiment? If therefore there be any dishonour in the case, let the reader judge to whom it most justly belongs. Could any thing be further necessary to vindicate the noble author from the misrepresentations of this Essayist, and to point out the true scope and design of these his two treatises, I might observe, what to those who are acquainted with them must indeed be very evident, that they were intended by the noble author as specimens of that very *manner* they recommend: Now as they do in fact abound with the most solid sense, the clearest reasoning, and the most convincing argu-

argument upon many subjects of the highest importance, and all conducted with inimitable politeness and eloquence, so I shall beg leave to give the reader one instance of the kind. In his *Essay on the freedom of wit and humour*, the noble author speaking of Mr. *Hobbes*, (who exposed himself to much danger, and took great pains in endeavouring to propagate his opinions) and other maintainers of the *savage* philosophy, asks, "What should we say to  
 " one of these anti-zealots, who in the zeal  
 " of such a cool philosophy, should assure us  
 " faithfully, that we were the most mistaken  
 " men in the world, to imagine there was  
 " any such thing as natural faith or justice?  
 " for that it was only *force* and *power* which  
 " constituted *right*. That there was no such  
 " thing in reality as *virtue*; no principle of or-  
 " der in things above or below; no secret  
 " *charm* or force of nature, by which every  
 " one was made to operate willingly or un-  
 " willingly towards public good, and punished  
 " or tormented, if he did otherwise. —  
 " Is not this the very *charm* itself? Is not  
 " the gentleman at this instant under the pow-  
 " er of it? — Sir! the philosophy you have  
 " condescended to reveal to us, is most extra-  
 " ordinary. We are beholden to you for your  
 " instruction. But, pray, whence is this zeal  
 " in our behalf? What are *we* to *you*? Are  
 " you our Father? Or if you were, why this  
 " concern for us? Is there then such a thing

“ *as natural affection* ? If not, why all this pains,  
 “ why all this danger on our account ? Why  
 “ not keep this secret to yourself ? Of what  
 “ advantage is it to you to deliver us from the  
 “ cheat ” ? This is ridicule, but then is it not  
 reasoning too ? *Tully*, I presume, would have  
 been so far from speaking of such a passage as  
 this, as the *lowest effect of genius*, that he would  
 on the contrary, have thought it worthy of  
 being placed, as a shining ornament, in some of  
 his own most admired performances.

HAVING thus endeavoured to set the design  
 of the noble author's two treatises in a just  
 and clear light, I may proceed to consider the  
 remarks, which this Essay-writer has made  
 upon some of his Lordships arguments and il-  
 lustrations. The noble writer has observed, *p. 11.*  
 That “ *gravity is of the very essence of impos-  
 ture* ” ; upon which the Essayist makes this re-  
 mark, *this will do very little for his purpose, unless  
 he can prove too that imposture is of the essence  
 of gravity. p. 69.* I should have thought,  
 that if gravity be of the essence of imposture,  
 that would be a sufficient ground for our en-  
 deavouring to detect its gravity, and to intro-  
 duce into our reasonings, such a method as  
 would make us less liable to be imposed upon  
 by it, (and this can be no other than the way  
 of freedom and good humour) without trou-  
 bling ourselves to consider, whether the propo-  
 sition reversed would hold equally true. I  
 must however leave it to every one to judge  
 for

for himself whether, as sharpness is of the very essence of a sword, it would not be his wisdom to fly from one brandished in a madmans hands without staying to examine whether every thing that was sharp was a sword. But there is another passage of the noble author, which has afforded the Essay-writer abundant matter for exultation and triumph. His Lordship speaking of the reformation here in *England*, says, p. 28. "That had not the priests, "as is usual, prefer'd the love of blood to all "other passions, they might in a merrier way, "perhaps, have evaded the greatest force of our "reforming spirit". Here says the Essayist, p. 75. *The noble writer forgets his part, which is that of a believer and a protestant ; and with reference to the same passage tells us, p. 76. Here then lies the dilemma ; let his followers then get him off as they can : If their master be a believer, he has reason'd ill, if a free-thinker he has managed worse. Get him off as they can, Sir ! Nothing more easy.* His Lordship had observed immediately before, that many of our first reformers, (it was to be feared) were little better than enthusiasts ; this he thought might have given ample occasion to the *Romish* priests, to ridicule and expose them in a facetious and good humour'd manner ; and apprehended that such a method might have been more successful towards putting a stop to the reformation, than the dreadful persecutions and cruelties of *Queen Mary's* Reign. And his argument is plainly this ; that

if it may probably be supposed that mirth and ridicule, even of the lowest kind, and unsupported by any pretence to argument, (for it is of such kind of ridicule he is here speaking) might have been attended with some success, merely thro' the force of good-humour, towards countenancing and upholding error; how much more reasonable is it to imagine that a raillery of a more refined and delicate kind, animated by strong and manly reasonings, should be in a proportionably higher degree successful for the discovery and confirmation of truth? Nor can I see any thing in this argument that is inconsistent with the character, either of a believer, or a free-thinker; especially as these two characters (to the honour of religion be it spoken) are perfectly compatible with each other. But the Essayist in order to fasten this dilemma upon the noble author and his followers a little more effectually, produces a passage from *bishop Burnet's* history of the reformation. *Bishop Burnet*, (says he, p. 76.) tells us, "That in the year 1542, " plays and interludes were a great abuse: " In them mock-representations were made both " of the clergy and the pageantry of their wor- " ship. The clergy complained much of this as " an introduction to atheism, when things sacred " were thus laughed at; and said, they that be- " gun to laugh at abuses, would not cease till they " had represented all the mysteries of religion " as ridiculous. The graver sort of reformers did

“ did not approve of it ; but political men  
 “ encouraged it, and thought nothing could  
 “ more effectually pull down the abuses that  
 “ yet remained, than the exposing them to the  
 “ scorn of the nation”. Now not to make any  
 reflections upon the excellent logick of the *Po-*  
*pish* clergy, (which some of another name have  
 shewn themselves willing to adopt) that mock-  
 representations of *them*, and their *pageantry* must  
 needs be an introduction to *atheism* ; I would  
 observe, that if there be any force in this  
 piece of history to support the *general argu-*  
*ment* of the Essay-writer, or to weaken my Lord  
*Shaftesbury*’s reasoning, it solely and intirely de-  
 pends upon taking it for granted, that the  
*graver sort of reformers* judged better in this  
 affair than the *political men* ; now as *grave gen-*  
*tlemen* may happen sometimes to be on the  
 wrong side of the question, I presume we  
 have here, an instance of it ; and that the *po-*  
*litical men* were perfectly in the right. And I  
 cannot but wish from my heart, that their  
 scheme had been pursued, (especially as it was  
 no way inconsistent with their best endeavours  
 for convincing by reason and argument ;) and  
 that in consequence of this, remaining *abuses*  
*had been pull’d down*. Could there have been  
 any mighty harm in *pulling down abuses* ? Or  
 are there any *grave gentlemen* who find their  
 account in *keeping them up* ?

B U T it is time we come to the case of  
*Socrates*. The noble author in his *letter on en-*  
*thu-*

*thusiasm*, p. 31. expresses himself thus, "The  
 " divinest man who had ever appear'd in the  
 " heathen world, was in the height of witty  
 " times, and by the wittiest of all poets, most  
 " abominably ridiculed in a whole comedy,  
 " writ and acted on purpose. But so far was  
 " this from sinking his reputation, or sup-  
 " pressing his philosophy, that they each in-  
 " creased the more for it, and he apparently  
 " grew to be more the envy of other teachers".  
 This the Essay-writer calls an *extraordinary*  
*assertion*. P. 57. and tells us *ib.* and p. 58.  
*That it appears from all the records of antiquity,*  
*that the wit of Aristophanes was the most formi-*  
*dable enemy that ever attacked the divine philoso-*  
*pher: this whetted the rage of a misled multitude,*  
*and dragged to death that virtue which has ever*  
*since been the admiration of mankind.* Notwith-  
 standing all the pains which the author has  
 taken to establish the truth of this observation,  
 and notwithstanding it has, as he tells us,  
 the authority of one whom he is pleased to  
 call the *first writer of the present age*, to  
 countenance and support it; I cannot but be  
 of a different opinion, since (not to insist  
 upon the distance between the acting the co-  
 medy and the death of *Socrates*) *Plato* has so  
 expressly in his apology introduced *Socrates* as  
 saying, that if he was put to death neither *Any-*  
*tus* nor *Melitus* would be the cause of it, but  
 the *calumny* and *envy* (*διαβολη τε και φθονοι*) of a  
 multitude, and since the enmity of his first  
 opposers

opposers among whom was *Aristophanes*, is in the  
 same apology, so plainly imputed to his wisdom,  
 high reputation, invincible resolution, and unwea-  
 ried diligence, in detecting ignorance and expo-  
 sing vice and folly. After producing the authori-  
 ty of *Plato*, it can scarce be necessary to observe  
 that *Diogenes Laertius* introduces his account  
 of the accusation and death of *Socrates* in such  
 a manner as plainly to impute them to that  
 envy and malice, which his high character  
 for wisdom, and the freedom he took in de-  
 tecting the ignorance of self-conceited sophists,  
 had exposed him to, and actually brought upon  
 him. And it is extremely unnatural to re-  
 present the comedy of the *Clouds* as the *ori-*  
*ginal cause* of his death, instead of considering  
 it as one of the effects of that envy which  
 he so early incur'd, and to which he at  
 length became a sacrifice: from all which it  
 appears, that what the Essay-writer is pleased  
 to call *obstinacy* and *ignorance* is not yet *silen-*  
*ced*. But supposing the accusation and death  
 of *Socrates* had been owing to the comedy  
 as its *original cause*, how does this affect  
 any thing that my Lord *Shaftesbury* has  
 asserted? "So far, says he, was this (this abo-  
 " minable ridicule) from sinking his reputation  
 " and suppressing his philosophy, that they  
 " each increased the more for it". And might  
 not this be very true, notwithstanding he was  
 put to death, and is it not in fact true, that  
 as *Socrates* was held in the highest reputation  
 during

during his life-time, so after his death, the *Athenians* bitterly repented their cruel usage of him (as the writer of his life just now mentioned informs us) erected a brazen statue to his memory, and avenged themselves of his accusers and judges? And as to his philosophy it has been the study and delight of some of the wisest and best of men, even to the present day. So far is it from being true, that either the reputation or philosophy or *virtue* of *Socrates* were *dragged to death* by the comedy of *Aristophanes*. With how much justness and propriety this case was introduced by the noble author, it is easy to discern; for if a ridicule thus supported by malice and envy could not injure the reputation of *Socrates*, or suppress his philosophy, how is it possible that the free and candid, the good humour'd, easy and sociable manner of discussing truth, which he so generously pleads for, should be of the least disservice to it?

AND now as to the charge which is brought against the noble author for giving a false translation of a passage in *Aristotle*, (*Essay on the Characterist.* p. 81.) I am content to leave it to the candid and sensible, to judge whether as he has in his marginal note, not only inserted as much of the original as was necessary for his purpose, but likewise referr'd to the *Latin* translation, this was not design'd on purpose to prevent any imposition, and to intimate that what occurs in the text was not intended as a  
literal

literal version, but only as a paraphrase upon the saying of the ancient sage, expressing, as he supposed, its meaning and foundation, *p.* 81. or whether it is likely, that if he intended an imposition, he should himself so plainly and immediately detect it. If it be necessary to take any notice of the *see-saw* observation, *p.* 84. it must needs be sufficient to remark that it bears equally hard upon the saying of the ancient sage himself, upon *Aristotles* quoting it with approbation, and even upon this author's own translation, as it does upon the noble writer, since there is the same general antithesis in all; and making "Gravity the test of humour, and humour of gravity," can certainly have no more of contradiction in it, than *confounding serious argument by raillery, and raillery by serious argument*, *p.* 82.

M A N Y other reflections there are in this *Essay on Ridicule*, design'd as a confutation of the noble author, which I think it quite unnecessary to take particular notice of, as all appearance of their propriety immediately vanishes upon considering the true design and real scope of the two treatises it pretends to criticize. And having, as I hope, in the foregoing remarks, clearly pointed out that scope and design, and shewn that the *Test of Ridicule* is no other than the test of free and chearful inquiry, or that unrestrain'd, sociable and pleasant manner of investigating truth, and examining opinions, which the no-

ble author had observed, with such high approbation in the writings of the ancients; I need not, I think, enter upon a vindication of his sentiments, or enlarge upon their propriety, usefulness and importance; they will speak sufficiently in their own defence; and this Essay-writer himself has been pleased to express his approbation, as we have seen above, of that chearfulness and good humour which is so strongly recommended, and so much insisted on in the characteristics. The noble author indeed knowing that men are never more disposed to laugh than when they are chearful and in good humour, and that the natural subjects of ridicule are never more frequently to be met with than when we are considering the various opinions of mankind in philosophy and religion, and the manner in which they have argued for, and defended them, allows and justifies a *mannerly wit and decent raillery* in all our speculative inquiries, thinking it greatly to the dishonour of truth and religion to prohibit and restrain them. The Essay-writer, on the contrary, is for *keeping ridicule remote from the operations of reason*, p. 96, 97. Nay, for its *being wholly rejected in treating every controverted subject*. But how can this be reconciled to *chearfulness and good-humour in the prosecution of our most important inquiries*? How hard the terms to be always chearful, yet obliged never to laugh? This writer himself has with a most ingenious profusion

fusion of words, and no doubt to the great edification of his reader, fill'd up an intricate section, consisting of several pages, with this *one* observation, that in every part of the world, men are laughing one at another from *Wapping* even to *Pegu*; and if the *courtier* and the *fox-hunter* take this liberty with each other, (I suppose without any great harm,) if an *innocent country-village* be sometimes *set in an uproar of laughter by a well-meant joke*, p. 54. Why may not philosophical debates be *innocently*, and with a *good-meaning* refresh'd and enlivened, and their chearfulness and good-humour supported by an agreeable and facetious raillery? What injury can it be to truth or *candid* inquiry, so long as it is mutual, and what my Lord *Shaftesbury* contended for, that is *fair play*, be *allowed in the same kind*? Or shall religion and philosophy only be seen to patronize absurdity and folly, while every other science, and every noble art freely indulges a contempt and ridicule of whatever is foreign and unnatural, and tends to diminish their perfection and beauty? This author indeed endeavours to explode even the *sense of ridicule* itself, and the *feeling the ridiculous* by calling them *new-fangled expressions*, p. 97. And yet, if we have not a sense of ridicule, what is it prompts us to laugh? If we do not feel the ridiculous, what is it we laugh at? But that he may still more effectually establish his scheme, he observes, p. 105. That *if*

*the love of ridicule be not in itself a passion of the malevolent species, it leads at least to those which are so.* Who would have thought that mirth and good-humour, or if the author chuses that term, *contempt* when thus expressed and indulged, should have such a malignant tendency? Nor can I upon this author's assertion merely, believe it. The laughers (those excepted who laugh in their sleeves) have ever been an innocent race; nor do I remember to have once read of their meeting in council, either general or provincial, to invent odious names of distinction, to thunder out new anathema's, to advance fresh claims of authority and power over the understandings and consciences of mankind, to kindle the fire of persecution, to trample upon worth and honesty, and to establish iniquity by a law. It is the men of *formal aspect* and *wise mein*, distinguish'd by holy names and venerable titles, who have always been employed, or rather have always employed themselves in this most malicious and infernal work. But our author having thus endeavour'd to exclude ridicule from *controverted subjects*, that we might not however be deprived of so natural an entertainment, has been so kind as to tell us what it is that we may *innocently* divert ourselves with. *The proper use of ridicule is to disgrace known falshood, and thus negatively at least to enforce known truth.* Yet this (with great caution he tells us) *can only be affirmed of certain kinds of falshood*  
or

or incongruity, to which we seem to have appropriated the general name of folly, and (with still farther caution he adds) among the several branches of this chiefly I think to affectation, p. 103, 104. Thanks to the courteous author, if there should be in this or any other part of the world an order of men, who call themselves ambassadors, without producing their credentials, who without any peculiar investiture or attainments claim a peculiar holiness of character, and moreover pretend to communicate that holiness to stones and timber, to bricks and dirt ; who set up for an independent jurisdiction in this world by the authority of Christ, who said his kingdom was *not* of this world, or who affect to pass for friends of liberty, when in reality they are undermining it ; and if at the same time there should be any others who *know* all this to be *falsehood*, *incongruity* and *folly*, they have this authors leave to laugh, but how much and how long I presume not to say. And this brings to my mind an *odd contrast*, which the author takes notice of, p. 100. *The oddity of the contrast he tells us is remarkable enough*, that he, (the author of the independent whig) should pronounce the "Tale of a Tub" to be a "*libel on christianity*", while it is in fact a "*vindication of our ecclesiastical establishment*", and at the same time entitle his own book, "*A vindication of our ecclesiastical establishment*", while it is in fact a "*libel on christianity*", But what is

it that the author of the *independent whig* has libelled, but tyranny and arbitrary power, ecclesiastical usurpation, and priestly craft, clerical pride and mean-spirited superstition? And are these christianity? Or are they not on the contrary, its greatest enemies? Do they not corrupt its principles, obstruct its usefulness, deface its beauty, and darken all its glory? However, as to the "Tale of a Tub", the author observes, that *if we consider this master-piece of wit as a mode of eloquence, we shall find it indeed of great efficacy in confirming every member of the church of England in his own communion, and in giving him a thorough distaste of those of Scotland and Rome, and so far as this may be regarded as a matter of public utility, so far the ridicule may be laudable.* Of what great efficacy a book that is full of obscenity, double entendre, swearing, and all manner of scurrility, and which even blasphemes the athanasian mystery; of what great efficacy, I say, such a book can be towards establishing every member of the church of England in their own communion is hard to conceive. This author himself indeed afterwards says, p. 102. *This noted apologue — had been better spared, because its natural effect is to create prejudice, and inspire the contending parties with mutual distaste, &c.* But if the book had been better spared, might not this authour too have better spared his encomiums upon it? His not doing so may give some room to suspect that even the

the *grossest* ridicule is not by every body thought to be a thing of so malignant and pernicious a nature, let it but be employed on the right side of the question.

I flatter myself, that by attending to the several preceding remarks, and considering them in a connected view, it may be clearly discern'd that there is nothing advanced in this *Essay on Ridicule*, that can in the least degree depreciate from the merits of the two treatises of the noble author, whose sentiments are indeed so just and natural, so generous and sublime, and withal so compleatly solid as not to be overthrown; or so much as weaken'd by any of the most deliberate efforts of vain and assuming pedantry. Here I finish my remarks for the present, not without some thoughts of pursuing them thro' the two remaining *Essays*.

F I N I S.



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